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ABSTRACT

This handbook offers guidelines to community colleges interested in the formation of advisory committees to the humanities. It begins by outlining the purposes and functions of such groups. It then emphasizes the importance of faculty and administrative support for advisory committees and suggests evidence that can be presented to promote this support. After several examples are cited of ways in which lay advisory committees have been initiated at community colleges, the paper identifies several components of effective planning efforts and discusses the functions of a planning group made up of concerned faculty and administrators. Next, the selection, characteristics, membership rotation, and size of the advisory committee are discussed, and the roles and functions of key committee members are examined, including the chairperson, secretary, and community college representative. The next sections of the guide suggest questions that should be addressed as the committee establishes its annual program of work and recommend possible committee activities in the areas of student recruitment, follow-up, and continuation; instruction; instructor quality; and community outreach. Next, guidelines are presented for conducting effective committee meetings and criteria are recommended for evaluating the meetings. In conclusion, the paper recommends additional bases for judging the effectiveness of advisory committees. Sample agendas and a list of additional resources are appended. (AYC)

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ADVISORY COMMITTEES to the HUMANITIES

topical paper number 74

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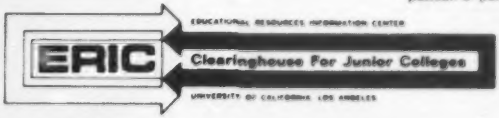

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ADVISORY COMMITTEES TO THE HUMANITIES

A HANDBOOK

BY

FLORENCE B. BRAWER

AND

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FALL, 1981

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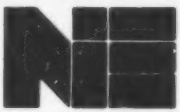

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About the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges:

ERIC/JC covers the field of two-year college education through publications, computer searches, and documents accessioned into the ERIC database. Write to the above address for further information.

What is an advisory committee? What are its responsibilities? Who are its constituents? How does it function and for what purposes?

Whatever it is called--Citizens' Humanities* Advisory Group, Advisory Committee for the Humanities, or Lay Advisory Committee--an advisory group provides the college with a valuable community resource.

An advisory committee is composed of a number of persons, who, as the name suggests, advise

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*The numanities include anthropology, art, cultural geography, ethnic studies, foreign languages, history, law/government, liberal arts, literature, music, philosophy, religious studies, social studies, and theater/film.

another agency, division, or institution on pertinent issues--for example, trends in a discipline or profession, course offerings, or community interests. This type of committee has become almost a tradition in secondary schools and two-year colleges that offer vocational/technical programs. However, the notion of an advisory committee to the humanities is relatively new, and some of the objectives and purposes of such a group differ from those of an advisory committee for a vocational/technical program.

This handbook offers guidelines to help in the formation of an advisory committee to the humanities. By outlining possible benefits and potential pitfalls, it should be useful to college practitioners, administrators, and members of the community. Background materials were obtained from the California State Department of Education, the Washington State Council on Vocational Education, the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges at UCLA, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, and personal communications from individuals who have formed advisory committees. A list of contact persons who are knowledgeable about such committees is appended.

PURPOSES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

An advisory committee to the humanities brings in people from the community to help the college maintain an active and vital program. The committee provides information, advice, and visibility for the program. An advisory committee can gather information on trends in humanities education on the local, state, and national levels, aid in keeping

the humanities program current, offer reactions to policies from the points of view of persons outside the college, and make information available to the public regarding special events or programs. Since an advisory committee stands outside legislative and administrative bodies, its often fresh and energetic voice can be helpful to a humanities program. Frequently, an advisory committee could help place humanities students and graduates in occupations that would use their skills.

Because education for young people and adults requires the cooperative effort of the college and the community, educators must understand the needs of both students and members of the community. The committee members, often prominent citizens, can help bridge the gap between "town and gown," and integrate educational efforts with community offerings and opportunities. Some members may be in a position to employ students who are completing a community college program or to suggest areas of employment. Others may be able to show that the arts and humanities can become an integral part of life, whether one pursues them as an occupation or as an avocational interest.

An advisory committee, which can provide invaluable information and support to educators who are developing or operating college programs, may perform any or all of the following functions:

Assist educators in formulating goals, objectives, and activities for their programs.

Help students and graduates find jobs.

Assist faculty members in relating instruction to the needs of the community.

Help develop and implement public information

programs.

Assess the adequacy and appropriateness of facilities, equipment, and teaching materials.

Assist in developing community surveys related to the humanities.

Advise in developing and using cooperative education training plans and agreements.

Recommend criteria to use in evaluating programs.

Promote the humanities as an essential part of life.

SUPPORT

Support on the part of faculty and administrative staffs is essential if the advisory committee is to succeed. Faculty opposition to the formation of a committee can defeat its functioning even if top-level administrators mandate the committee's existence. To secure faculty support a process must be developed to acquaint faculty with the idea, provide specific applications that might be useful locally, and detail the functioning of a humanities advisory committee. Faculty dedication, inquisitiveness, and expertise will be the keys to the acceptance of an advisory committee.

Specifically, the faculty can be presented with the evidence of past success and the potential on their campus for similar benefits. Points that need to be made include:

This is not an administrative attempt to coerce faculty; the committee is advisory to the humanities division through its chairperson.

The committee will not engage in busy work that will take up valuable time in already pressed

schedules but rather will bring new resources and allies to help accomplish worthwhile projects.

Possible failure is worth any chance taken in terms of the exciting array of constructive possibilities that an advisory committee can help to advance.

The members of the committee will bring a new dimension of contacts, resources, insight, and energy to help accomplish the goal of effective humanities education on the campus and in the community.

Administrative support is also essential in forming an advisory committee. The positive benefits of such a group must be explained carefully and concisely to the appropriate upper-level administrators. Support is evidenced by:

Official chartering of the humanities advisory committee by the Board of Trustees and the President.

Having the President issue the invitations to prospective members.

Asking administrators to attend the initial meeting dinner at which the President gives a welcome speech.

Using staff development or other funds to help make the case for formation of an advisory committee among the humanities faculty at a retreat or special workshop.

FORMING A HUMANITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Efforts to form advisory committees have

occurred in many ways. For example, in Washington State, humanities faculty at Clark College went on a retreat to discuss the status of the humanities. Out of this discussion, the question of forming a lay advisory committee was raised. At Shoreline Community College, a committee was formed by two faculty members after they attended a workshop on the topic. The humanities division chairperson and several faculty members at Olympic Community College attended a workshop on the topic, then returned to their campus to rally support for a committee.

In the San Diego Community College District of California, a faculty member obtained preliminary approval for an advisory committee from the District Executive Council, a group representing various constituencies from the four campuses. With backing from the Council, she spoke to a number of faculty members, obtained their support, then submitted a proposal to the District Board of Trustees.

After a National Endowment for the Humanities consultant suggested that the humanities division at Brevard Community College in Florida establish an advisory group, the division chairperson met with each faculty member to explain the purposes and benefits of such a group and to respond to their concerns. When a majority of faculty members endorsed the idea, the humanities division met and voted to proceed with the plan.

At Sinclair College in Ohio, the formation of an advisory committee was an objective written into a National Humanities Faculty grant. Its inclusion gave the concept legitimacy, so faculty were eager to work with the committee.

The effectiveness of an advisory committee

may be determined by the amount of constructive planning that takes place before the organization is actually formed. A group of concerned faculty, acting with the assistance of the dean or president, should form a planning group. The planning group should enlist the support of as many faculty members as possible, informing them of the committee's purposes, role, and actions that may be taken.

An initial discussion of the humanities advisory committee might focus on the following points:

The committee members are concerned with the humanities. They will bring a new dimension of contacts, resources, insights, and energy.

The committee advises the humanities division through its chairperson, who is often the college representative to the advisory committee.

The committee will bring to the humanities division new resources and allies.

Specifically the planning group will:

Obtain approval from the college board of trustees to form the committee.

Select members.

Decide whom to invite to the first meeting.

Schedule a meeting time and place.

Invite participants by mail and follow-up with telephone calls.

Arrange for the college president and appropriate deans to attend

Appoint an interim secretary to record proceedings of the first meeting.

Prepare an agenda.

THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Members of advisory committees are selected from individuals who are outside the education profession and, except for the college representative, are always outside the host institution. The committee may include community leaders, museum directors, librarians, bank officials, business men and women active in the local performing arts, artists and musicians, directors of radio and television stations, and professionals committed to the arts.

Persons appointed to an advisory committee for the humanities should be familiar with the community, visible, and aware of the capabilities, image, and philosophy of the college. In addition, members should be interested in at least one facet of the humanities--either through their vocation or through avocational pursuits. Community members should be involved in community projects; people who are doers are likely to be active committee members. They must have time to attend meetings and participate in projects. Candidates should also be civic-minded and have a cooperative spirit.

Provision for rotation of members of advisory committees should be made in the committee's guidelines. One popular rotation method calls for replacing one-third of the advisory committee each year. Thus, when the committee is first formed, one-third will be given one-year appointments, one-third two-year appointments, and one-third three-year appointments. This method provides for both continuing and new members each year. Another approach is to choose initially a group to serve for three years and in the second year to add new members as needed.

The size of the advisory committee will be determined by the strength and size of the humanities program, whether the college is autonomous or part of a multicampus system, whether the community college is rural or urban, and the size of the host community. Committee members should include the chairperson, secretary, college representative, and selected members of the community.

The Chairperson

The principal function of the chairperson, who is elected by the committee, is to preside at all committee meetings. Faculty members should work closely together, through the committee's college representative, in determining issues to be discussed in the meetings.

To a large extent, the manner in which the chairperson conducts meetings will determine the effectiveness of the committee. The chairperson will delegate many duties to the secretary or other members of the committee, but the chairperson is still responsible for the following functions:

Prepare a suitable agenda.
Provide background information as necessary.
Preside at meetings.
Establish meetings dates and notify the committee members.
Initiate action based on decisions made at meetings.
Provide reports as required.
Maintain necessary personal contacts with members.

The Secretary

The advisory committee secretary should have a close working relationship with the other members. This person should:

- Understand the college humanities offerings and be aware of the relative importance of issues and objectives.
- Be able to explain the programs and courses to others.
- Be sensitive to others' points of view.
- Be able to organize detailed material into a meaningful whole.
- Have a facility for writing.
- Be able to motivate college administrators or faculty members to provide necessary information for the committee's work.

The secretary may be elected by the committee from among its membership. In view of the considerable routine, time-consuming work entailed in this position, it is recommended that some person working for the college be chosen for this office. Since few members of the committee will have sufficient time for this responsibility without pay, the institution might compensate the representative for performing such functions, perhaps by assigning released time.

The secretary is responsible for the preparation and mailing of announcements, minutes, and other information relevant to committee members, college personnel, and others who must be kept informed of committee activities. The importance of accurate and neatly prepared reports and letters should not be minimized; the timeliness of announcements and feedback following meetings is equally important.

Minutes and other records of advisory committee activities should be filed at the college. These should be available for review by authorized personnel for five years.

The College Representative

The community college representative is the liaison between the advisory committee and the college and should be involved with the humanities and eager to promote them. The college representative should be willing to meet at a time best suited to the committee.

Since an advisory committee to the humanities serves a department or several closely related divisions, the department or division head usually becomes the college representative. Instructors other than the official college representative meet with advisory committees when committee members need to consult with them about specifics of their courses and departments. Committees usually invite instructors on a rotational basis in order to facilitate their work and allow for full discussion. Instructors only attend meetings in order to elaborate on their courses, provide information not generally available, and primarily to receive--not to give--advice.

The college representative should strive to maintain good lines of communication between the advisory committee and faculty members. It is the chairperson's responsibility to make sure that after each meeting instructors are given a report of the activities of the advisory committee. The representative should also familiarize committee members with the functions and objectives of the humanities programs and courses within it. It is unrealistic to expect new members

to be acquainted with the philosophy of the college or to possess extensive knowledge of the educational programs with which they will be involved. Some advisory committees to vocational programs have been handicapped because school or college authorities, not recognizing the necessity of having an informed group, made no plans for orientation. Therefore, committee members were sometimes unable to appreciate the methods the institution used in achieving its objectives or to interpret the program to the public.

The college representative should work with the chairperson to ensure that the advisory committee acts as an advising rather than an administrative agent. The advisory committee functions should be fully utilized in such actions as suggesting the initiation of new programs or altering existing ones. To best utilize the advice and assistance of the committee, such changes should be presented with facts pertinent to the new or changed programs. College representatives should not set too many objectives for the advisory committee or allow the committee to deviate too far from them. They should avoid using privileged information for their own benefit or profit, and they should heed the committee's recommendation. If the proposals are rejected by the college, the representative should offer reasons for the action taken.

A FUNCTIONING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

An advisory committee does not function effectively unless its members are motivated and guided. The committee must know what it is to do, why a particular task must be accomplished, when the task is to

be completed, and, for its own satisfaction, how well it performed its functions. This cannot happen unless there is cooperation between the college representative and the advisory committee chairperson.

Designing an annual program of work for the advisory committee, therefore, must be a joint effort. Proper planning by and guidance from college personnel can eliminate many of the frustrations that have caused some vocational education advisory committees to fold. College personnel must remember that committee members are contributing their time and present only those issues relevant to the purposes of the committee.

Planning normally begins with a responsible central administrator, generally the college representative. By listing program needs, certain areas of concern can be identified and brought to the attention of the committee. In recommending activities, specific goals and objectives must be stated, strategies for their attainment developed, and some means of evaluation recommended. Certain major questions could be addressed by the committee:

- What are the characteristics of humanities students?
- How can more students be encouraged to enroll in humanities courses?
- How could humanities modules be developed for occupational courses?
- What types of extracurricular humanities offerings can be established by the college?
- How can the college related to humanities offerings off campus--for example, museums, libraries, concerts?

Should humanities courses be developed that are specific to the community--for example, the art history of local Indian tribes?

Are courses offered at convenient times for students who also work outside the college?

Could the committee provide awards for an outstanding faculty member and outstanding student?

What are the potentials for internships and jobs for students in the community?

How can the importance of the humanities in everyone's life be emphasized?

POSSIBLE COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Student Recruitment, Follow-up, and Continuation

Encourage students of all ages to consider taking the humanities by having committee members visit high schools, speak at civic clubs, attend career days, or write articles.

Provide literature concerning the value of humanities skills for counselors, parents, teachers, and students.

Recommend procedures to help graduates find jobs or admissions to upper-division education programs.

Help establish selection processes for honors programs, scholarships, and other special awards to students.

Help college personnel set up and conduct effective follow-up procedures.

Help establish special programs for students gifted in the humanities.

Help students and graduates find jobs.

Aid in exposing students and graduates to occupations not usually considered by graduates of humanities programs.

Instruction

Review humanities offerings and advise about changing conditions and needs in order to suggest new curricular directions, modes, and additions or deletions of courses.

Advise about the adequacy and appropriateness of facilities, equipment, and instructional materials and recommend needed changes.

Recommend procedures for implementing and evaluating cooperative educational training plans and agreements and vocational programs in the humanities.

Assess the need for night classes and other means of outreach that relate specifically to current community needs and issues.

Assist with plans to eliminate bias and unfair discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, creed, religion, age, handicap, or national origin.

Assist in establishing a library of books, magazines, and audiovisual aids germane to the humanities and their development.

Assist teachers in tailoring instruction to the needs of the community.

Suggest offerings and locations for community service offerings.

Assist in keeping the humanities program current.

Recommend criteria for evaluating courses and programs.

Instructor Quality

Define qualifications for humanities instructors when openings occur.

Suggest criteria for evaluating instructors.

Recommend inservice programs to improve instructional competence.

Assist educators in developing goals, objectives and activities.

Community Outreach

Help establish lectures and other special programs to increase visibility and understanding of the humanities in the community and to enrich campus life.

Speak for humanities programs and concerns at college and community meetings.

Promote the humanities as an essential element in the life of every citizen.

Strengthen community ties by identifying and responding to community needs.

Assist in developing community surveys related to the humanities.

Help to plan and disseminate information to the public about special events, programs, and meetings.

Recommend ways that the college can stimulate the general public to value humanities education.

Recommend ways in which business, industry, the professions, and labor can increase community

understanding of the need for humanistic skills and education.

CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Effective advisory committee meetings are the result of careful planning. All committee members should be made to feel that they are part of a team. The success of the chairperson will depend somewhat on general knowledge, sensitivity, and the ability to perceive types of behavior in meetings that lead to failure or success. The chairperson must anticipate potential pitfalls, keep the group on track, and channel discussion toward concrete results.

In laying the foundation for successful advisory committee meetings, some guidelines may be helpful. These pertain to individual members as well as to the committee as a whole.

Accentuate the positive.
Aim for full attendance at meetings by notifying participants in advance.
Meet regularly.
Always present a clearly designed agenda.
Provide effective leadership.
Provide a comfortable setting for meetings.
Be certain that procedures are recorded.
Refrain from setting oneself up as final authority.
Avoid pressuring the group.
Use language that is readily understood.
Assure members of confidentiality of opinions expressed in meetings.
Encourage participation by all members.

EVALUATING MEETINGS

Evaluations of an advisory committee should follow each meeting. The chairperson, secretary, and college representative could form an evaluation team of convenient size. Questions forming a basis for the evaluate might include:

Was the agenda appropriate?

Was the meeting conducted satisfactorily?

What were the principal outcomes?

Did the items of the agenda evoke interest and discussion by the committee?

Were they understood by all members?

Were they considered valid, within the committee's field of interest, and important?

Was the back-up material sent out in time, and in proper form to orient each member prior to the meeting?

Was the meeting room adequate for the meeting?

Who is acting on suggestions made at the meeting?

Are the minutes ready to be mailed?

Have all items requiring special attention been identified?

Who is handling them?

Is the college prepared to keep the commitments made to the committee members?

Are there special tasks, reports, or assignments that call for immediate attention?

Was the committee qualified to address the questions brought before it?

Did the committee understand the underlying problems before rendering advice or suggesting a solution?

Based on the way the committee handled this problem, what other college problems should be directed to it?

Should the problems have been handled by an advisory committee or another college group?

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of an advisory committee cannot be judged on the basis of a single meeting. The influence of an active committee frequently reaches deeply into the community, and its contributions are not always immediately tangible. Consideration should be given to such matters as field trips for students and faculty arranged by committee members, scholarships, job placements, curriculum involvement, participation as guest lecturers or speakers at college events, and the many other activities to which many advisory committee members give so generously of their time and expertise.

It is time that the humanities look to new modes of support. Advisory committees might well supply that support and offer new avenues for integrating the college with its community resources.

APPENDIX I

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR FIRST MEETING

The first meeting must be used to acquaint the new committee members with each other and the college. The agenda for the first meeting should include:

Welcome and remarks by the college president or representative.

Introduction and short biography of each member.

Statement of purpose by the college representative.

Documents regarding the philosophy, objectives, and organizational structure of the college; summary of how the college is funded; the nature of the humanities programs, offerings, faculty; and a copy of the Lay Advisory Committee to the Humanities: A Handbook.

A short business session to select a chairperson and a secretary, to adopt a meeting format, to determine terms and replacement methods, and to set the date for the next meeting.

APPENDIX II

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS

Establishing meeting procedures will make it easy for committee members, faculty members, and others to bring an item to the attention of the committee. The format outlined below provides for an open agenda that lets members know the status of each item and the type of action that is expected at future meetings.

Welcome by the chairperson and introduction of new members and visitors.

Reading of the minutes.

Approval of the agenda (with additions and deletions from the floor).

Presentations and demonstrations.

Reports by the chairperson, standing subcommittees, ad hoc committees, college representative, etc.

Final action items (those items that will be decided at this meeting, including any special or emergency items).

Old business items discussed before but not yet ready for final decision.

New business.

Announcements.

Plans for the next meeting.

APPENDIX III

FORMAT FOR MINUTES

(College Name) Humanities
Advisory Committee
Minutes of Meeting

Date:
Time:
Place:
Present:

Absent:

Documents Distributed:
Actions Taken:

Summary of Discussion:

Date, Time, and Place for the Next Meeting:

APPENDIX IV

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Individuals who have worked to form humanities advisory committees and their colleges are listed below. These people may be contacted to discuss their experiences, make suggestions, and describe the problems they encountered and the unique benefits their committee brought to the humanities on their campuses.

Allen Gates (Humanities Division Chairperson-Instructor)
Clark College
1800 E. McLoughlin Blvd.
Vancouver, WA 98663
(206) 694-6521

Dennis Peters (Philosophy Instructor)
Shoreline Community College
161 Greenwood Ave.
North Seattle, WA 98133
(206) 546-4101

Polly Zanetta (Humanities Division Chairperson)
Olympic Community College
16th & Chester
Bremerton, WA 98310
(206) 478-4551

Dorothy Berger (English Instructor)
San Diego Mesa College
7250 Mesa College Drive
San Diego, CA 92111
(714) 279-2300

Robert Aitken (Chairperson)
Division of Liberal Arts
Brevard Community College
1519 Clearlake Road
Cocoa, FL 32922
(305) 632-1111

James Walter (Chairperson, Department of Humanities and Foreign Languages)
Sinclair Community College
444 West Third Street
Dayton, OH 45402
(513) 226-2500

Further general information about advisory committees and related research is available from:

The Center for the Study of Community Colleges
1047 Gayley Avenue, Suite 205
Los Angeles, CA 90024
(213) 208-6088

and from

The ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior College
96 Powell Library
University of California, Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA 90024
(213) 825-3931

A 36-minute videotape entitled "Forming and Using Lay Advisory Committees to the Humanities" describing their formation and initial issues in the state of Washington is available from the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges. Please write the Clearinghouse for ordering information.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
96 Powell Library Building
University of California
Los Angeles, California 90024

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